

# FROM THE CENTER TO THE PERIPHERY: HOLY SEE'S DIPLOMACY IDEOLOGICAL DISPLACEMENT AFTER POPE FRANCIS

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## Introduction

With the end of the bipolar system, the rise of new international actors, mainly those emerging from the so-called periphery, started a process of rearrangement of power relations in the international arena. After five hundred years of Western supremacy, old power centers, such as China, seem to be returning to the global arena, looking for a qualitative rather than a quantitative inclusion. This is similar to what happened after the African and Asian decolonization and nowadays it refers to the reform demands that take into account changes that took place since the end of World War II.

In this context, Pope Francis' Pontificate, the first non-european and the first Latin-American pope, had begun. The new head of the most influential religious transnational actor seems to be inaugurating a new stage of the Catholic Church action in the world, characterized by the ideological displacement, less Eurocentric and more leaned to the emerging periphery, in accordance with the current international system rearrangement demands. Through an international reading of the first years of his pontificate, associated to the analysis of the global and regional context – emphasizing the Latin-American conjuncture – that preceded him, this research will look forward to highlight the role that the Holy See can play in the current reordering moment, not only of the religious, but also of the political context.

This study also seeks to build new conceptual categories that may be able to explain the notion of transnational religious actor and its role on the

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international arena, which is considered a secularized system.

In the first part of the article, we will analyze the impact of the presence of transnational religious actors on the current international system in transition by paying special attention to the biggest of them all: the Catholic Church.

In the second part, we will analyze the changes of the Roman Curia structure and composition during period between 2013 and the beginning of 2015. Following, we will review some of the speeches of both Pope Francis and his new Secretary of State, emphasizing what seems to be the key-points of Vatican's diplomacy.

Through these analyses, we will verify the hypothesis that, during these two first years of pontificate, Pope Francis seems to be performing the ideological displacement of the Holy See, getting the Catholic Church, traditionally connected to the national and international elites, closer to the political and ecclesial world periphery.

## 1. The impact of transnational religious actors in the current international system: the Catholic Church case

It is necessary to elaborate a short premise to understand the context on which the religious actors insert themselves and become relevant on the international system, and why the "unexpected" rise after centuries of apparent silence happened before we attain ourselves to the description of the international impacts themselves.

Indeed, the agreements of Westphalia that marked the end of long religious wars in Europe, in 1648, established the guiding principle of the new international order. The application of *cuius regio eius religio* should guarantee that, from that moment on, State policy would be immune from any religious connotation. Certainly, politics connected to religion had become synonyms of threat to order, security and rationality. Therefore, religion needed to be banned from the public arena. Politics and Religion "could not coexist in international relations." (Petito and Hatzopolous 2003, 2) Religions lost its influence on international politics. National states started to be considered the only actors capable of influencing international dynamics. When the first international relations theoretical strands were born, nation states still occupied a prominent place among other types of actors. However, the religious phenomenon kept being ignored or even rejected by the subsequent theories that were developed in the inter-war period.

In the last decades, nevertheless, the religious phenomena rose and

registered, at the same time, surprise and interest among those who study the international system. From the end of the 1980's decade and, even more after the 9/11 incidents, the analysis of religion in the ambitus of international politics have been gaining each time more space. The "forgotten" factor, using the Petito and Hatzopolous (2003) expression, seems to be returned from exile, being even considered, by some analysts (Dosdad 2006; Ferrara 2014), between the key elements for the understanding of the transforming world today.

In the scope of this reevaluation on the importance of the religious phenomenon, side to side with state and non-state actors, traditionally known as influential, these transnational religious actors grow in relative importance according to Haynes (2009), and undoubtedly affect states domestic and foreign policies. Along with North-American evangelical movements, other religious actors include moderate and extremist Islamists, Hindus, fundamentalist Jews, Catholics and others.

Such transnational religious actors have in common the capacity to act in international relations by interacting with groups that have similar goals and by trespassing state boundaries to achieve their vital objectives. That is only possible on today's reality, where communication barriers have been knocked down and national networks at a global level do not find great obstacles, leveraging the capacities of such actors to get through states frontiers and become more significant on molding international issues (Haynes 2009).

Amongst the major transnational religious actors, the Holy See and consequently the Roman Catholic Church, counting with more than 1 billion followers around the whole world, stands out in the international arena, mainly for possessing

a special bond between spiritual and temporal authority, through the combination of a religious organization and a state structure, through the superposition between the holy and the sovereign. The Pope is, at the same time, Sumo Pontifex and Executive Power in the Vatican state (Turzi 2013, 30).

The Holy See, the governing organ of the Catholic Church, is the only religious institution in the world that has the prerogative of maintaining diplomatic relations with states. Currently, the Holy See has representatives in 177 states, besides keeping permanent observers in international organisms, such as the United Nations and others.

Even though it is considered a state with all characteristics that con-

stitute this political institution, the Holy See remains a state actor *sui generis*. The interests it seeks are neither economic nor military. Although it has two security corps, the Swiss Guard and the Gendarmaria corps<sup>2</sup>, the Holy See does not possess the traditional Hard Power instruments that qualify the importance of a country on the world stage. So, what type of power correlation distinguishes the Holy See from others?

By utilizing Joseph Nye's concept of *Soft Power* strength, defined as the attraction and persuasion power rather than the coercion and reward, one can infer that the Holy See utilizes this kind of power as the base of its international actions, involving elements that are difficult to measure and that is characterized by various dimensions.

The Holy See makes use of this power through a capillary network of local churches and social or educational institutions around the planet. Even those who do not follow this institution hear its messages. Its actions, positive or negative, have echoes in the global media. Financial and sexual scandals mined the legitimacy and credibility of the Catholic Church, especially during the last two pontificates, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Pope Francis, since his first appearance, seems to be looking for ways to reestablish the Church's lost credibility.

## 2. The First Latin-American Pope revolutionary attempts

Since Pope Francis election, a lot has been discussed and a lot has been written about the possible influence of his geographical birthplace on the future of the Catholic Church. Pope Francis is not only the first non-European pope, but he is also the first Latin-American one, that was born and raised on southern world, on the periphery of power, both political and ecclesial. Nevertheless, this is not a sufficient condition to explain the new paths that Francis is taking.

One of the *papabiles* during the conclave that elected cardinal Bergoglio was also Latin-American, but belonging to the conservative wing of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the fact that Francis is Latin-American does not explain completely the displacement he is developing. Alongside his Latin

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2 Both corps task is defending Vatican's City State. The Swiss Guard origins date of 1506, when they were received as Pontific Permanent Army by Pope Julius II. The Gendarmaria corps were created by Pope Pio VII, in 1816, abolished in 1970 and reborn in 1991. Nowadays, it wears blue uniforms and is constituted by 100 trained agents, descendant from antiterrorist offices and that act protecting the pope and the surveillance of people entering the doors of Vatican. When papal trips happen, it is up to them to secure the Pope with local police and authorities.

origins, there is the fact that the pope is Jesuit. The Society of Jesus is one of the oldest religious orders where the component society is, together with study, obedience and insight, an important variable to be considered for the understanding of Bergoglio's posture.

The fact that Pope Francis chose to live in Santa Marta's House, having contact with lots of people, instead of residing on popes reserved apartment – compared by himself to a funnel, where access is strict and you can only get in through a drop-counter (Spadaro 2013) – can be explained by this importance given to the society component. Another element that is important to take into account is his pastoral experience in an archdiocese at Buenos Aires. Therefore, we choose to go through his biography, looking forward to evidence elements that could lead us to a broader understanding of his choices.

## 2.1. Pope Francis biographic notes

Pope Francis – Jorge Mario Bergoglio – was born in December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936, in Buenos Aires. His family – railroader father, housekeeper mother – was original from Piemonte region (Italy's northwest). Bergoglio, after entering the diocesan seminary, left it to become Jesuit (Spadaro 2013). He studied theology before, in Argentina, and got his doctoral in Germany. After he returned to Argentina, he was nominated Jesuit Provincial (of Argentina and Paraguay), exercising this function from 1973 to 1979. In 1976 the militaries were responsible for a *coup d'état*, establishing a repressive regime that lasts until 1983.

Bergoglio, as he revealed during an interview to the Jesuit Antonio Spadaro for the magazine “La Civiltà Cattolica”, played the role of a provincial with no experience on how to run a society. When he took to power, at the age of 36, he adopted an authoritarian posture that earned him critics and accusations of ultraconservatism. However, thanks to this difficult experience, when later nominated Archbishop of Buenos Aires, his attitude towards it was completely different (Spadaro 2013).

In 1992, he was nominated Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires and, in 1998, he was nominated as Archbishop. John Paul II made him Cardinal in 2001. Between 2005 and 2011, he was President of the Episcopal Conference in Argentina. As mentioned before, this time his experience at governance was far more positive than the one as Provincial. At the age of 56, Bergoglio learned that “governing was not about giving orders, but about listening, reaching consensus, solving problems by giving time to evaluate them deeply” (Politi 2014, 139). As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he favored the contact

with priests of his dioceses, encouraging them to practice mercy. His pastoral was known for the sensibility towards social problems.

Frequently, by bus more than by car, he visited villas (the most poor neighborhoods in Buenos Aires), participating in meetings with priests that worked with poor people. He used to talk to *cartoneros*, the people responsible for gathering the trash in the city. Bergoglio felt on his own skin the big problems of a metropolis with its cultural pluralism and contradictions. Picturing the new pope origins, Politi shows the big difference between Francis and the Pontifices that preceded him:

Francis is the first pope that was born and raised in a contemporary metropolis. The Argentine pontific, even though descending from a remote part of Europe, is the only one that had a dramatic and varied experience in a giant city, around which gravitated thirteen million habitants. Ratzinger, Roncalli, Wojtyla and Luciani were all born in little provincial cities, and even during their careers they ignored the metropolitan rhythm (Politi 2014, 140).

The daily contact with Argentine people – he preferred to live in a little single place instead of the episcopal residence – encouraged his effort, as Archbishop, to fight social inequality, openly denouncing those he considered responsible for the suffering of the people, and among those were Nestor Kirchner and his administration. Such posture gave him a boost of popularity, on one hand, but trouble with the authorities, on the other. Truly, by the end of 2010, Cardinal Bergoglio was publicly pointed out as “collaborationist” during the military regime. Reports published by the biggest Buenos Aires papers – aligned with Kirchner’s government – indicated that Bergoglio, in 1976, when Provincial for the Jesuits, had betrayed two priests of his order, Yorio and Jalics, that were arrested and tortured. Once released, the two priests fled to Rome, and were welcomed by the General Superior of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe. They remained in silence for many years and the attitudes of Bergoglio remained unclear until his election. According to Fratini (2014), newspapers close to Kirchner’s administration were concerned on feeding doubts, which became known after the pope election. Just then, the silence of one of the priests was broken. Father Jalics lives currently in Germany, and, after Bergoglio’s election, he confirmed that they were never betrayed by the the Provincial. According to his information, he has never denounced the two of them. They believed in that until the late 1990’s, when, thanks to a conversation between them, the truth was finally understood.

President Cristina Kirchner visit, in March 18<sup>th</sup> 2013, right after her election, was interpreted as a sign of truce between Bergoglio and the Argen-

tine government.

## 2.2. The first steps towards the Reform of the Roman Curia, the Papacy and the Catholic Church

During the general congregations pre-conclave meetings occurred in March 2013, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>, three proposals got approved by the Cardinals: the Curia reform, making it more simple and efficient; the cleaning of Vatican's Bank; and the promotion of collegiality, establishing frequent consultations between the Pope, the Cardinals college and the National Episcopal Conferences (Politi 2014).

During the interview to Antonio Spadaro, from the "La Civiltà Cattolica" magazine, referring to the Curia Reform and to the competences of the Dicasteries that compose it, he affirmed that these are "in service of the pope and of the bishops: they should help both the private churches and the episcopal conferences [...] if they are misunderstood, they risk themselves of becoming censorship organisms. Roman Dicasteries are mediators, not intermediaries or managers" (Spadaro 2013). According to Politi (2014), this would already represent a revolution, because what was considered until now only an instrument that was totally on the hand of the Pope, should transform itself in a mechanism of help and connection between the papacy and episcopates from the whole world.

Another point brought out during the interview was the biggest autonomy that Pope Francis wished for the local Episcopal Conferences. For instance, remembering the amount of delates on the lack of orthodoxy that arrived to Rome, Pope Francis affirmed that "these cases should be studied by the local Episcopal Conferences, to which Rome can give some helpful assistance. The cases, indeed, are best treated at locally" (Spadaro 2013).

Such decision, if it gets concrete, would constitute a rupture with the posture adopted by Benedict XVI. De facto, for Ratzinger, the National Conferences would not be an integrant part of the Church structure, only having a practical function (Ratzinger 2000). From this point of view, Benedict XVI defended the maintenance of a vertical, Imperial type Church, where Rome dictated the laws to national offices, while Pope Francis is working so the Church can become a participative institution, whose actions can be horizontally defined through the collaboration between the central government of Rome and national churches.

In April 13<sup>th</sup> 2013, exactly one month after his election, Pope Francis gave the first concrete step towards the so expected Roman Curia Reform,;

the creation of a group of eight Cardinals plus a Secretary with the objective of counseling the pope on governing the Catholic Church and on the process of revision of the Apostolic Constitution "Pastor Bonus", from 1988, that regulates the structure and functioning of the Roman Curia.

The Cardinals that integrate the pope's consult Council are derived from all continents and, with exception of the City of Vatican State Governor, Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, none of them belongs to the Roman Curia. After the admission to the group of the Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, the group started to be extra officially called by the name of C9.

Since its creation, the Council assembles every two months on the residence of the Pope, Casa Santa Marta. The reunions lasted for three days, with the constant participation of the Pope. After the first reunions, the Council reached the conclusion that it will not be enough to imply reform the Constitution "Pastor Bonus", from John Paul II. They would need to redesign "again the model of the Curia, after centuries of ultra-centralized power" (Politi 2014, 149).

### ***2.2.1. Renew of the Cardinals College***

On these two years of pontificate, Pope Francis nominated 31 new electoral cardinals that are renewing the Cardinals College of the Catholic Church. According to Canon 39 of the Canonic Law Code from 1983, it is up to the Cardinals College to arrange the election of the Roman Pontific, besides helping the pope "whether acting collegially, when they are invoked to take care of common major importance issues, whether individually, at the various crafts they play, assisting the Roman Pontific at the quotidian solicitude of the universal Church"<sup>3</sup>.

The Cardinals College was established in 1150. The number of cardinals integrating it has grown over the centuries. During Paul VI pontificate, rules were established on the maximum number of members, established on 120, and on the maximum age of the electors, stating that by the age of 80, Cardinals are no longer able to join the Conclave. But what draws most of the attention in the analysis of the creation of electoral cardinals during the last pontificates is the geographical provenance of these cardinals. During the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, most of the electoral cardinals came from Europe and even more from nations near their birthplaces. Also in the case of the Roman Curia, Francis chose a different path. Cardinals chosen

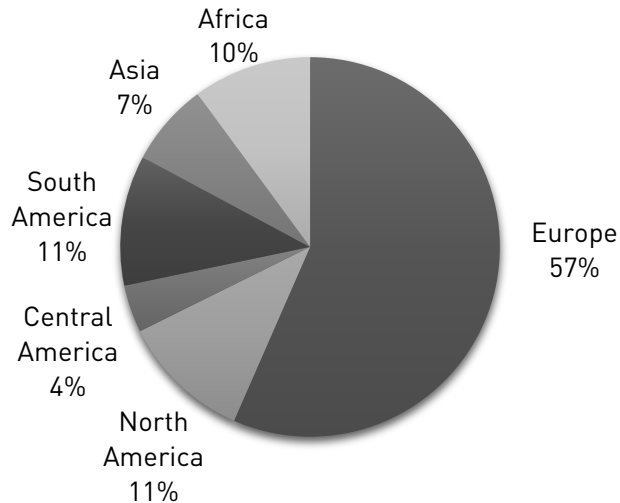
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3 Canon Law Code. Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/portuguese/codex-iuris-canonici\\_po.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/portuguese/codex-iuris-canonici_po.pdf). Access in: 27 mai. 2014.



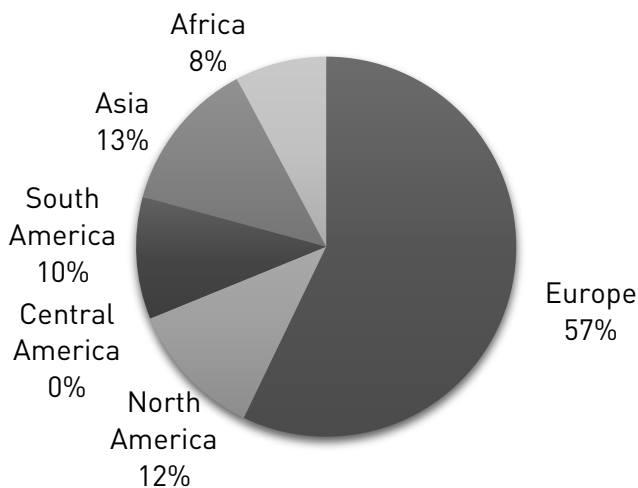
by Bergoglio came from every continent, with evident decrease of the percentage of Europeans in relation to the pontificates that preceded him, as we can see in the charts that follow.

### Cardinals Designated by John Paul II



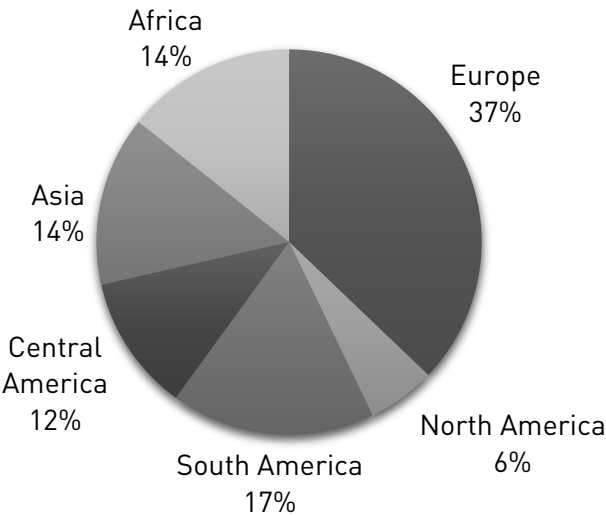
Source: <http://www.vatican.va>

### Cardinals Designated by Benedict XVI



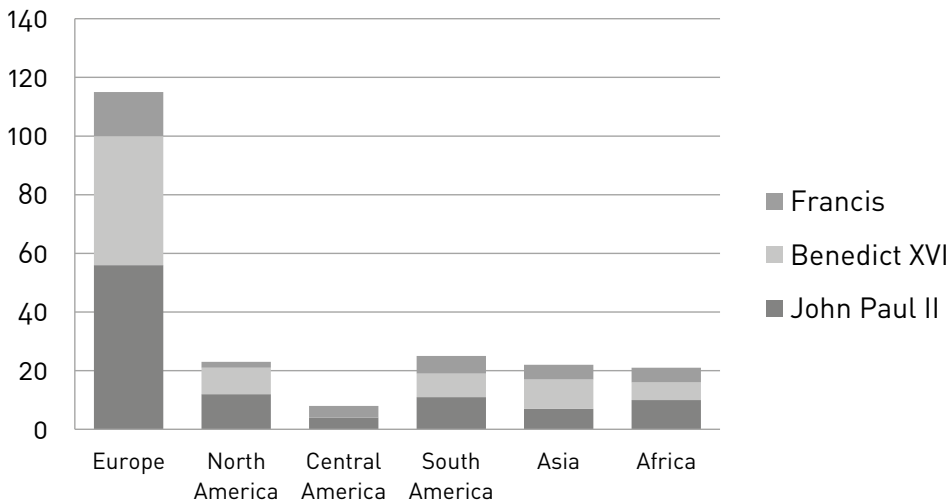
Source: <http://www.vatican.va>

Cardinals Designated by Francis



Source: <http://www.vatican.va>

The graphic that follows shows the geographical distribution of Cardinals that currently compose the Cardinal College.



Source: <http://www.vatican.va>

There is still disparity between Europe and other continents, disparity that is the result of choices made during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. However, one can estimate that some years from now, Pope Francis should have renewed more than half of the electoral body, leaving behind a more representative Cardinal College, where all continents are present and where the weight of Europeans and Italians should be a lot smaller. According to Politi “the future of Catholicism lies not on the old continent anymore, but it is among the people of the Third World. The Sumo Pontific himself reinforced the Latin-American component, where almost half of today’s Catholics live” (Politi 2014, 238).

### ***2.2.2. Revolutionary changes on the Papacy and on the Catholic Church***

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis showed that the path he was going to chose would be the one of change, starting by the name, one that had never been selected by those who preceded him. Besides that, Bergoglio refused to be called Francis I, probably because this enumeration could remind of a dynasty rather than a religious leader. Finally, he left clear that the name he chose referred neither to the Spanish missionary Jesuit Francisco Xavier that conquered Asia, nor to Francisco de Assis, the saint that defied the rich and corrupt Medieval Church presenting himself as the representative of a Church extremely devoid of richness and titles.

The references to poverty as an indispensable characteristic of the Catholic Church and of its representatives are constant elements on the official Papal documents since he was elected in 2013.

The reform of the Institute for the Works of Religion (IWR), known popularly as the Bank of Vatican, is considered one of the first steps given by the new Pope towards Vatican restructuring. Such reform – indicated on the first year of his pontificate – is being characterized by the total clean of the financial movements of the Vatican, by the raise of transparency and by changes of directors that were involved in scandals.

Still on 2013, Pope Francis established a Council for Economy, created for the surveillance of the management of economic, administrative and financial activities of all structures of the Holy See. Eight Bishops and seven lay professionals constitute the Council. The president is the Cardinal of Munich, Reinhard Marx, also a member of the C9, that assists the Pope on governing the Catholic Church.

Besides the financial reforms, the style of conducting the Catholic Church and its representatives are present in the new administration.

In his first international visit to Brazil, Pope Francis, directing himself to the Bishops responsible for the Latin-American Episcopal Council (CELAM, in Portuguese), called for attention on the dangers of clericalism, highlighting the characteristics that Bishops should present.

Bishops should be priests, close to people, fathers and brothers, with great goodness: patient and merciful. Men that love poverty, who wants interior poverty as a freedom before the Lord, who wants external poverty as simplicity and austerity for life. Men that have no "prince psychology" (Papa Francisco 2013)

By the end of 2014, Pope Francis speech to the Roman Curia's Cardinals and Bishops was highlighted by the media. The Pope seized the moment to unite with those Cardinals and Bishops, in a Christmas occasion, to present them a list of fifteen diseases that could affect the Curia. Between them, the Pope contrasted the disease of feeling immortal, of excessive industriousness, of mental and spiritual stiffness, of excessive planning, of spiritual Alzheimer, of rivalry, of vainglory, of spiritual schizophrenia, of gossip, of indifference, of accumulation, of mundane circles, of mundane profits and of exhibitionism, among others (Papa Francisco 2014). After the speech, he united with the employees of Vatican and their families and presented a forgiveness request: "I do not want to end this good vows meeting without asking you forgiveness for my failures and of my collaborators, and also for some scandals that are really bad. Forgive me." (Papa Francisco 2014).

The Roman Curia diagnosis presented so clearly by the Pope on that occasion, attracted criticisms that came not only from the own Vatican territory, but also from more conservative Catholic environments.

His rebellion not to embrace the same lifestyle of his predecessors was considered an outrage to the tradition that supported the papacy on its history. The most conservatives considered this a critic to the Popes that came before him and to the traditional Church model, considered as the central untouchable structure of the Catholic Church. There is the fear that Francis, with his simplicity, diminishes the holiness of the papal person (Politi 2014).

Always accordingly to Politi (2014, 232) "remodeling and simplifying the Curia would mean, in perspective, a power, influence and money loss for a certain bureaucratic-ecclesiastic class, that perpetrates from centuries".

The criticism that Cardinals and Bishops that belong to this group can no longer manifest openly are aired through several websites and papers, both Italian and foreign.

Regardless of the continuous attacks from the media, Pope Francis

seems to be firmly advancing and deciding, even though he knows that the years of his pontificate – which his opposition hopes will be short - will not be enough to finish the necessary reforms to change the course of the Church, until now guided by such monarchic principles.

One of the strategies he seems to be using is to surround himself of competent and professional people on their acting area that can help him turn such changes into efficacy, and elevate the preparation levels of the Catholic Church representatives. For instance, the constitution of the C9 which we spoke of before and the change of his collaborators on it is considered one of the most important areas of the Holy See and, thus, of its international dimension.

Such dimension is acquiring each time more visibility, precisely because of this ideological displacement Pope Francis begun, turning attention to the global periphery rather than to the traditional power centers.

### **2.3. Pope Francis' new diplomacy**

The choice of the geographical origin of the new cardinals seems to demonstrate a special attention the Pope is giving to guarantee a greater balance between center and periphery. Even though the number of European cardinals is still big, there is a trend to increase in the short run the contribution of the periphery, counterbalancing the weight of the Roman Curia and the European Church. Strengthening local churches would guarantee a greater decentralization of the power relations inside the own Catholic Church, a demand that goes back to the II Vatican Council, but that until now has remained only in paper.

This hypothesis is reinforced by the analysis of the goals of the recent trips made by Pope Francis during these two years of pontificate. Pope Francis visited Brazil, Turkey, Albania, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and the next visit to Cuba. By considering these trips, we have the impression that the Pope's preference regarding the periphery did not remain just rhetoric. The countries he visited are countries either on Europe's periphery, or in the so-called Southern region of the world, characterized by a past or present of conflicts and exclusion from the global political and economic center.

The visits made inside Italian territory were mostly to small cities. If we observe carefully Pope Francis' way of speak and act, we notice that since the beginning he chose a specific way of governing: few collaborators, but well-formed ones and that are able to help him see and understand the international panorama in which the Catholic Church is inserted, so he can take

final decisions. Between these collaborators, the choice of the Secretary of State is considered to be the most strategic for the success of the pontificate. The figure of the Secretary of State corresponds, in the Holy See, to the one of the Prime Minister or the Foreign Relations Minister, on other states.

During the pontificate of Benedict XVI, for instance, the figure of his Secretary of State, Tarciso Bertone, suffered from detrition and could not help the already complicated pontificate of this Pope.

The new Secretary of State is not a canonist like Tarciso Bertone, but an experienced diplomat that Francis looked for, maybe not by chance, on his birthplace region, South America.

Pietro Parolin, Italian, born in 1955, when called by Pope Francis, resided in Venezuela where, since 2009, exerted the functions of Apostolic Nuncio. He arrived at Venezuela after gaining significant international experience. Besides the experience at Mexico and Nigeria, Parolin worked for 10 years as Secretary of State, and during that time he deepened his knowledge of the main geopolitical issues of the Asian continent: Israel-Palestine and the delicate relations with Vietnam. Made Cardinal in 2014 by Pope Francis, he participates regularly on the Cardinals Council (C9) meetings.

To understand the key-points of the diplomatic concerns of Pope Francis, we choose three documents that express such concerns, which are the two *Lectio Magistralis*, proffered in the name of the Pope by Cardinal Parolin respectively in March 2015, at the Roman Gregorian Pontific University and, in April 2015, in the Triveneto's Theology College, plus *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation written by Pope Francis in 2013 – almost a manifest on the future of his pontificate.

In *Lectio Magistralis*, approaching the goals of the Holy See's diplomatic action, the Secretary of State underlines the proactive posture of their diplomacy, affirming that "it cannot settle the role of critical voice, being called to act and facilitate the coexistence and acquaintanceship between the various nations" (Parolin 2015).

So that the Holy See can have the adequate means to make this action effective and incisive, Pope Francis proposed that the Office for Pontific Mediation comes back to active, replacing the Secretary of State and serving as the link between the Holy See's activities in other countries with the activities of other International Institutions. In the 1980's, during the pontific of John Paul II, this office was created inside of the Council for Public Affairs, which is now known as the Section for State Relations in the Secretary of State. The job of this office involved developing juridical-political contents that could help on the resolution of territorial disputes between Argentina and Chile for

the Beagle Canal, on the extreme south of the American Continent.

The arbitration and mediation function can be considered one of the traditional actions of the Holy See through history on its relations with other countries. Parolin remembered that this mediation is deeply linked to the ecclesial dimension, precisely because it was through the presence and role that the Church played in other countries that the Holy See's diplomatic intervention was found essential (Parolin 2015).

In the following month, Parolin proffered a new *Lectio Magistralis*, this time directed to the academic community of the Triveneto's Theology College, during which he evidence the Pope's vision on the challenges of contemporary world. A lot of the elements of this conference coincided with the themes foresaw by the Pope during the Apostolic Exortation *Gaudium*.

According to Parolin, the Pope foresees an open world, where *a priori* there are no pre-established situations or habits.

This Pope that comes from far away, from the end of the world, like he said in the day of his election, looks towards Europe and the world with different eyes, de-centered and distant from that view that sided with a traditional theological reading. He belongs neither to the East, nor to the West, just like he does not come from the heart of the international system; it is because of this that his teachings make our usual perspective uncomfortable, and, in some way, changes our way to see the world and the Church. Like a good Jesuit, he exercises his discernment and puts himself on the search for God's will to ascertain it and, so, prepare himself to take good decisions for Earth: what is, at the same time, geopolitical and theological." (Parolin 2015).

Being the first non-European and Latin-American Pope certainly influences Bergoglio's vision and approach of his pontificate. He does not possess a moral debt that Europeans, voluntarily or not, assimilated regarding the United States, as a consequence of the horror of both World Wars. On the contrary, he personally lived the hard impact of the security policy adopted by the North-American power towards Central and South America during the Cold War period. Such experiences made possible the different view Pope Francis has of the periphery. He wants to avoid the possibility to align to a hegemonic power to take forward the goals of the Catholic Church, like other papacies. His preference lies in a multipolar world, where differences instead of dividing people could add and leverage the search for a less unequal world.

According to Parolin, in the new Francis pontificate

Peripheries should be in the center of concerns of all countries that are socially, politically and economically protagonists of the world system, as well as in the international institutions called to program and manage co-operation. Only after covering the peripheries it will be possible to activate programs and actions inspired by solidarity and assistance. (Parolin 2015).

And, to reach the excluded, the peripheries, the Holy See's diplomacy is considered a privileged instrument.

If governments elaborated that which is called the Reason of State, exercising a Hard Power through economic-financial or the force of weapons, the Holy See should elaborate a Reason of Church, through Soft Power made of convictions and exemplar behaviors. She must work, also through diplomatic action, to create justice, the first condition to reach peace (Parolin 2015).

## 2.4. Pope Francis and the attacks on Capitalism

The social justice theme is another recurring argument on Pope Francis' document. The *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation of 2013 – and the Enciclica of environmental issues, *Laudato Sí*, published a few weeks ago, present strong criticism to the current economic system, whose contradictions are pointed out by the Pope as the causes of the deepest of today's social problems. Pope Francis does not hesitate on affirming that “the social and economic system is unfair at its roots” (Papa Francisco 2013, 50).

Just like he did in Buenos Aires, criticizing the government corruption, Bergoglio, now as Pope, criticizes the world system as it is supported solely on the market logic.

We can no longer trust on the blind forces and on the invisible hand of the market. Equitable growth demands something more than economic growth, although it is seen as an assumption; it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and process directly oriented to a better distribution of incomes, to the creation of job opportunities, to an integral promotion of poor people that overcomes simple welfare. I do not want to propose irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer resort on remedies that are new types of poison, like when we intend to expand profits by shrinking the job market and then creating newly excluded (Ibid, 168).



Solidarity is pointed out by Francis as a fundamental element that should be present in all global relations, and as the antidote to the current economic system, that generates exclusion, poverty and the discard culture amid most of the world population.

As long as profits grow exponentially, the majority are each time further away from those that compose a happy minority. Such imbalance comes from ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of markets and of the financial speculation. Therefore, they deny the right of State control, in charge of the guardianship of the common good. It is established a new invisible tyranny, sometimes virtual, that unilaterally and ruthlessly imposes its laws and rules. (Ibid, 50).

In the *Laudato Si* Enciclic, after listing the gravest problems related to environmental degrading, Pope Francis highlights the profound link of this process and the social and economic poverty conditions that affect most of the world population, that result in a planetary inequality situation. Indeed, according to Pope Francis, there is not only inequality among people, but also among countries, what forces us to think of ethics in international relations and also that can make us think over the ecologic debt between North and South.

The external debt of poor countries became an instrument of control, but the same does not happen with the ecological debt. On many ways, people in developing situations, located the biosphere's most important reserves, are feeding progress in the richest countries at the expense of their own future. The land of the poor of the South is rich and little contaminated, but access to propriety, goods and resources to satisfy their vital needs is determined by a system of structurally perverse commercial relations and proprieties. (Papa Francisco 2015, 52-52).

During an interview in January 2014, the Pope defended its critics to the neoliberal system, highlighting the urgent need to operate structural changes.

We can no longer wait to solve the structural causes of poverty, to cure our societies of a disease that can only take us to new crisis. The markets and the financial speculation cannot enjoy absolute autonomy. Without a solution to the problems of the poor, we will not solve the problems of the world. We need programs, mechanisms and processes oriented to a better distribution of resources, to the creation of jobs, and to the promotion of those excluded (Francisco apud Tornielli 2015).

For these ferocious criticisms to the current economic system, Pope Francis was accused by the conservative environment of being a communist and of getting closer to Liberation Theology. When he was asked about such charges, Pope Bergoglio answered that his poor oriented preference existed since the beginning of the evangelical message.

If I could repeat some pages of the Church's first priests homilies, from the second or third centuries about how we should treat the poor people, there would be some who would accuse my homily of being Marxist. "It is not of your belongings that you give to the poor; you are simply giving back something that belongs to him. Because that what is given in common use for everyone that you hold. The earth is given to everyone, e not only to the rich". This are words from Saint Ambrose, that served to Pope Paul VI to affirm, at *Populorum progression*, that private property did not constitute an unconditional and absolute right, and that no one is authorized to reserve for its exclusive use that what overcomes someone's needs, when others lack what they need. John Chrysostom used to say: "Not to share your own goods with the poor means you are stealing from them and depriving their own lives. The goods that we possess are not ours, but theirs". (Francis apud Tonielli 2015).

The posture that the Pope adopted, in this sense, looks revolutionary in comparison to the traditional Catholic Church and papacy's positions. It is true that, also in earlier documents from John Paul II and Benedict XVI we could find critics to the neoliberal economic system. However, Pope Francis himself puts them in evidence on the *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exortion, as well as on the *Laudato Sí*. Nevertheless, such critics can be considered isolated references inside pontificates that did not acted to change or to oppose the present economic system. Pope Francis does not miss an occasion to call the attention towards the structural causes of poverty, violence and planetary inequality. His appeal to change can be found in all documents and speeches pronounced since the beginning of his pontificate.

### 3. Conclusions

Throughout this article, we tried to verify the hypothesis that, during these two first years of pontificate, Pope Francis was elaborating a diplomatic displacement of the Holy See, approximating the central structure of the Catholic Church, traditionally linked to international elites, to the world periphery.

The steps given by Francis during this period seem to be contributing

to the decentralization of power until then strict to the Roman Curia. Besides that, lots of important decisions taken by Pope Bergoglio, that, for matters of space limitations were not approached in this article, demonstrated an attempt to change the course of the Catholic Church. We named, for example: the creation of Social Movements Global Encounters and the incentive given by him to the fights of this sector of society; the beatification of Dom Oscar Romero, after years of silence from the Holy See that considered him too close to El Salvador's left wing; the rehabilitation of father Miguel d'Escoto, the priest that became, in the 1970's, Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the sandinist government, and, because of that, was suspended of his sacerdotal functions for 29 years; the pontific mediation between Cuba and the United States; the formal acknowledgment of the State of Palestine, among other international affairs. According to Cardini, Francisco

as a Peronist, he has a very advanced social vision of the world, almost Socialist. For him, social order is social justice, solidarity, peace and love. It is not by accident that Francis always condemns the economy, never directly the politics. He wants society to return to a model of pure Christianity, like Fr. Of Assis that got rid of all things. Just that, in the Middle Ages the context was integrally Christian. Bergoglio wants to knock down the constituted order, revert the flow of socioeconomic progress of the turbocapitalism. Here is your revolution, the apocalypse (Cardini apud Ciolli 2014).

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## ABSTRACT

Through an international reading of the first years of his pontificate, associated to the analysis of the global and regional context – emphasizing the Latin-American conjuncture – that preceded him, this research highlights the role that the Holy See can play in the current reordering moment, not only of the religious, but also of the political context. This study also seeks to build new conceptual categories that may be able to explain the notion of transnational religious actor and its role on the international arena, which is considered a secularized system.

## KEYWORDS

Holy See; Diplomacy; Transnational Actor.

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